

# Salvation by Faith

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## Believing and Trusting

### How God Makes Us Right With Him

A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have to put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. (Gal 2:16)

When God pardons the sinner, remits the punishment he deserves, and treats him as though he had not sinned, He receives him into divine favor, and justifies him through the merits of Christ's righteousness. The sinner can be justified only through faith in the atonement made through God's dear Son. . . . No one can be justified by any works of his own. He can be delivered from the guilt of sin, from the condemnation of the law, from the penalty of transgression, only by virtue of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. Faith is the only condition upon which justification can be obtained, and faith includes not only belief but trust. (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 389)

When studying the subject of salvation, we constantly encounter the terms *justification* and *sanctification*. Whatever happens during these two transactions, it is said to come about *by faith*. Faith is the means, the instrument. In respect to this topic the message is clear: without faith nothing can happen! So this first study will examine the questions What is faith? And what does it mean "to believe"?

From the outset we need to avoid the trap of dividing the subject before us into what *God does* and what *I do*, what God has done and what I myself bring for it all to happen.

Paul presents the whole salvation experience as one that "starts from faith and ends in faith" (Rom 1:17, NEB). Maybe to his mind came that Old Testament text "the righteous will live by his faith" (Hab 2:4). The Old Testament noun that comes nearest to *faith* in meaning (*emunah*) really means "faithfulness." It envisions someone who can be trusted or relied on. And because he is trustworthy, I take the step of placing my trust in him.

It is in the New Testament that we meet the full force of that which is called faith, and it is invariably rooted in one particular event in history: the death/resurrection/ascension of Jesus Christ. Faith in the Christian sense has no other focus, and when this event is not kept central, faith dies! Thus it is critically important to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2).

So what is faith? In the words of Ellen G. White, "faith includes not only belief but trust." Does she mean that faith has both an *objective* and a *subjective* side? I think so.

## **The Objective Dimension**

Faith is, first of all, something *objective*. That is, it has to do with information and data that lie outside my person and my experience. Faith looks out and finds its specific object in the Christ of history, and is prepared to make certain confessions-certain declarations. It confesses that God raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heaven. It affirms that Jesus is Lord.

Such confession arises from a body of information: I *know* what God has done in Christ, and therefore I can make confession! Such knowledge is primary and fundamental. For, says Paul, were I not able to confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ, I could not possibly find salvation: "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him" (Rom 6:8, 9). We believe because we *know!* This knowledge, then, is essential for salvation. It is the structural aspect of faith. This means that faith is specific, not just a religious feeling or a pious attitude. Its specific point of reference is Jesus Christ on the cross. On this structure hangs the whole saving experience.

## **The Subjective Dimension**

But this informed, objective aspect of faith becomes *subjective* when, looking at Jesus Christ, we move to place our trust in Him.

This means that as far as our spiritual life is concerned, we are prepared to let go of all other structures of security, pronounce them invalid, and turn to Christ alone. At this stage our good works, our successes, and our score sheets do not matter. Only one thing does: belief in Jesus Christ.

On the surface, we can all accept this. We can all affirm that we are saved by faith. But do we not become uneasy with the statement that we are saved by faith *alone*? And why? Because of contemporary caricatures of that position and its advocates.

Let us make one point clear: If faith is perceived to be simply an internal and private thing of the mind, and if we think that it is only at that level we relate to Christ, with no concern or interest in practical godliness and victory over sin, then such a faith clearly is not biblical, nor was it ever the position of our church. "By faith alone" does not mean that.

But if the expression "by faith alone" means that apart from trust in Jesus Christ, God has no other basis of salvation to offer, then surely this is biblical, and the position we've always held as a church. Indeed, this is where we stand today. We must not be so intimidated by caricatures that we are afraid to be clear. Paul leaves behind traditional Judaism, with its emphasis on good works and fine performance, and proclaims salvation based on "faith quite apart from success in keeping the law" (Rom 3:28, NEB; cf. Rom 5:1; Gal 3:5, 6).

It is at this point that we see faith as not just the recognition and knowledge of an event outside of ourselves, namely, God's accomplishment in Christ on the cross. We see it also as the subjective act of turning to Christ in trust and submission, declaring the filthiness of our own garments. With the high priest Joshua, we come to Him who says, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you" (Zech 3:4).

The change in posture is radical: it involves a turning away from self, and a focusing on Christ. We abandon our achievement scorecards and confess that at the end of day only Christ's achievement matters.

It is important that due recognition be given to this subjective aspect of faith. For faith is not

just the collection of the right theological information or historical data; nor, for that matter, is it the establishment of a convincing display of doctrines. These are all part of faith but by no means the sum of it.

Says Mrs. White: "It is not enough to believe *about* Christ; we must believe *in* Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 261, emphasis in original). And again: "The faith that is unto salvation is not a casual faith, it is not the mere consent of the intellect, it is belief rooted in the heart, that embraces Christ as a personal Saviour. . . . This faith leads its possessor to place all the affections of the soul upon Christ" (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 391).

### **Faith and Obedience**

Faith involves *obedience*-obedience to a Person (Jesus Christ) and to the message that comes from Him. Thus Paul can say: "All over the world they are telling the story of your faith" (Rom 1:8, NEB). "The fame of your obedience has spread everywhere" (Rom 16:19, NEB). And even more pointedly: "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith" (Rom 1:5).

Faith's obedience is not different from the obedience of the law. The fallacy of Judaism, however (and legalism in general), was that it used the law to establish its own righteousness. The Jews tried by keeping the law to project their own worthiness (their own righteousness). And their performance became a means of boasting and self-centeredness. The basic attitude was fundamentally wrong! For the attitude of faith is the very opposite of boasting! Faith does not take credit for its obedience, for it has nothing in itself to boast about. As Paul says: "Who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" (1 Cor 4:7). Faith does not even boast about itself, for it is only the means by which we receive the grace of God. In the words of Ellen White, "faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 175).

### **The Obedience of Faith**

Faith is not simply looking at a distant, historical Jesus. Rather, it is responding to His invitation to "follow me." That is how I become a disciple. It is by accepting the obligation to live a life of discipleship that faith becomes obedience. Surely this is what Mrs. White meant when she wrote that the faith that leads to salvation "is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. . . . The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour" (*ibid.*, p. 347). "To have faith means to find and accept the gospel treasure, with all the obligations which it imposes" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 112).

There is a ring of completeness and fulfillment in what Paul writes to his young friend Timothy shortly before the older man's death: "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day" (2 Tim 1:12). It is only the one who has unreservedly obeyed the call to discipleship and accepted all the obligations that that implies who can make such a confession.

True discipleship, then, is concerned with following the Lord: with being faithful to Him as a person, faithful to His commands, faithful to His truth and to His way of life. Here what matters is to do the Lord's bidding. The person of faith does not at the end of the day "add up the scores." Faith as obedience expresses itself in surrender, in looking to Jesus Christ, and in living according to His wishes. As such, it is obedience to a call. It means to live a life of obedience to

a Christ who is alive! In his 1522 introduction to his *Commentary on Romans*, Luther wrote: "Faith is a divine work within us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God (John 1); it kills the old Adam and makes altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and power, and it brings with it the Holy Ghost. Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith." Faith has only one way of expressing itself: in obedience!

### **Faith and Hope**

Faith points to the future. "The righteous *will* live by faith" (Gal 3:11; Rom 1:17). "If we died with Christ, we believe that we *will* also live with him" (Rom 6:8). While in one sense salvation is a real thing for believers *now* (1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15), men and women of faith live for the *future*, looking for the ultimate fulfillment. Following the pattern of Abraham, who hoping against hope believed, they live in anticipation, waiting with patience (Rom 4:18; 8:25). This beautiful element of hope is eloquently expressed in Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

Such hope partakes of the attitude that evoked these ringing words from the pen of Paul: "One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13, 14). Forgetting means constantly looking to Jesus Christ and being renewed again and again. It means abandoning attempts to justify ourselves, and relying on God in Christ Jesus. Faith's function is to receive Jesus Christ. It is a waste of time and effort to look elsewhere, for there is no other solution for the sin that haunts us. Faith does not save, faith does not justify, but it is the *instrument* for receiving what the Lord offers.

Finally, let us remember Paul's words in Romans 10:17: "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." The answer to a frail faith lies neither in works of duty nor in self-condemnation for our many shortcomings, but in feeding on the Word of God.

## **Acquitted**

### **The Glorious Commencement of Our Walk With God**

We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law. (Gal 2:15, 16)

In this passage Paul presents justification by faith as the good news that God accepts sinful men and women into fellowship with Himself. They are no longer strangers or aliens. And not because of their pious deeds, impressive credentials, or natural goodness, but simply because they have looked to Jesus Christ and have trustfully committed themselves to Him. They have answered yes to His invitation to discipleship.

In the matter of salvation there are two basic indisputable facts: (1) God is just, and (2) we are not. When we put these two factors together, we see our dilemma. Paul writes: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom 3:10, KJV). And because we are unrighteous, we are strangers to God, alienated from His presence, under the just sentence of death. And so the urgent question is

that of Bildad the Shuhite: "How then can a man be righteous before God?" (Job 25:4). How can we be clean? Justified we *must be* if we are to live, for in our natural state we stand guilty and condemned.

Paul tells us how God does it-how He sets us free: *through faith* (see Rom 3:28). It is a free gift, and reflects God's graciousness to creatures who cannot save themselves. This, says Scripture, is God's way of doing it. We are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (verse 24).

This message was completely foreign to traditional Judaism. The righteousness of Judaism was the "righteousness of the law"; if you keep it successfully, you will live. It's hard work. It's a struggle. You'll have to flog yourself, but it's the only way. You must obey all that the law says, and if you do this meticulously and flawlessly, you'll make the grade, and God will accept you and reckon you worthy. Because of your impressive scorecard God will declare you innocent.

This was the mind-set of traditional Judaism. And Paul certainly had this erroneous concept in view when he spoke of some who "did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own" (Rom 10:3). Such self-centered striving is certainly doomed to failure.

Traditional Judaism's view of justification and Paul's understanding of it have one thing in common: both understand justification to be a legal matter-forensic. For both it is a statement of acquittal-a declaration by God that one is innocent.

But there are two significant differences between Paul and traditional Judaism on this issue. The first we have already covered, namely, that justification is a free gift. The second is that whereas justification, in Judaism, is an entirely eschatological reality, for Paul it is also a present experience. It begins to work already now-a concept that should come easy for Seventh-day Adventists, given our knowledge of the ongoing, present judgment in heaven. Paul says: "Since we have been justified through faith, we *have* peace with God." "We *have* gained access by faith into this grace in which we *now* stand." "Since we have *now* been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" (Rom 5:1, 2, 9).

So this gift of justification, or acquittal, is not only legal "cover" for the *future*; it has impact on life as we experience it *here and now*.

### **False Alternatives**

In this matter of justification we are sometimes confronted with options that some find troublesome:

When God justifies and declares us righteous, does that say something about the ethical/moral qualities that God sees in us? Does it imply that we are basically good and decent? Or is justification simply a description of what God is going to do for us, in spite of what He sees in us, simply because we have chosen to fix our eyes on Jesus Christ? Is the justification of the sinner simply a legal acquittal, or does it effect actual changes within?

Could it be that these are really false alternatives?-that it is neither entirely one nor the other? Could it be both?

The word that the New Testament uses (*dikaioisune*) and that we meet in English as "righteousness," "justification," "acquittal," and its verbal form *diakaioo* can be used also in an ethical sense to mean "uprightness." But by and large it is used in a legal sense, as it is when dealing with the basis or condition for salvation. It does not describe the quality of the individual, but it describes the relationship of the individual to God.

This legal meaning is what we find particularly expressed in passages such as Romans 4:3 ("Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness") or Romans 4:5 ("To the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness"). (Cf. Rom 2:13; Gal 3:6).

Ellen G. White made this telling observation: "The great work that is wrought for the sinner who is spotted and stained by evil is the work of justification. By Him who speaketh truth he is *declared* righteous. The Lord imputes unto the believer the righteousness of Christ and *pronounces* him righteous before the universe. He transfers his sins to Jesus, the sinner's representative" (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 392; italics supplied).

This is something that God is ready to do. And justification has to do with our relationship and our legal standing before God. Somehow, wonderfully, we who are rightly guilty and deserve to die are being saved by God who chooses to declare us *not guilty*! In the words of Ellen White: "When God pardons the sinner, remits the punishment he deserves, and *treats him* as though *he had not sinned*, He receives him into divine favor, and justifies him through the merits of Christ's righteousness" (*ibid.*, p. 389; italics supplied).

However, we are not to think that God has gone soft on sin. It is not sin that God justifies! The involvement of God in Jesus Christ on the cross is sufficient answer to that. Christ died in my place and satisfied the unchangeable requirements of the law of the universe of God. Justification deals with people who are being brought into a right relationship with God—with those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness"; with those who know that they are guilty and who cry out for help; with those who know that they are strangers and aliens and who long to be united with God; with those who are crying out to God in the name of Jesus Christ for a verdict in their favor.

### **Is It a Legal Fiction?**

Is justification merely a legal acquittal, without any thought for simultaneous changes within?

I believe we make an infortunate mistake when we define justification so narrowly as to make it mean only a legal declaration of acquittal. I would suggest that passages of Scripture such as Romans 5:1-5 and Galatians 2:15-21 give a much more dynamic definition of the concept. When a man is justified, he receives at the same time both the imputed righteousness of Christ and the Holy Spirit into his heart. The gracious gift by which salvation is a reality contains *both*. Justification is by faith, without works (Rom 3:28). The gift of the Holy Spirit is similarly by faith, without the works of the law (Gal 3:2, 5). In Romans 5:1-5 these two are so linked that one cannot be present without the other.

Therefore, notwithstanding the theoretical priority we may give to justification, it constitutes one united experience with that of the renewal brought by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Restoring the relationship between God and man, which sin destroyed, is more than just an objective legal declaration. It is *dynamic*, and affects the complete life of the total person. In the judicial declaration of acquittal the creative power of God does something to a person. A miracle takes place. As the believer is acquitted, the creative powers of the Almighty are released in the life, changes occur, and a new creature emerges.

John Stott reminds us: "Justification is not a legal fiction in which a man's status is changed, while his character remains untouched. Verse 17: We are 'justified *in Christ*.' That is, our justification takes place when we are united to Christ by faith. And someone who is united to Christ is never the same again. Instead, he is changed. It is not just his standing before God

which changed; it is he himself-radically, permanently changed" (*Only One Way*, p. 65).

To imagine such a person going back again to live his former life in sin is, in Paul's thinking, a contradiction in terms. It's nonsense. Paul opens Galatians 5 with the words "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free [that's acquittal]. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." In verse 16 he describes the new life in the Spirit into which the justified person enters.

### **A New Creation**

This new life is one in which the creative power of God, released in justification, causes a new creation to emerge. In talking about this newness, he uses such terms as *death* and *resurrection*, as he does in Romans 6, with the strong ethical imperative *Live therefore a new life!* The same point is made in Galatians 2:19, 20: I now live a *new* life! "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor 5:17).

Having met the arguments of the critics, Paul now gives in Galatians 2:21 his final forceful argument: The Christian message is the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ. Its focus is the cross. If it were possible to be right with God through discipline, lawkeeping, or education, then the cross was ultimately unnecessary and the Christian faith is vain. But the message of the Christian faith is clear: Salvation comes to us as a free gift. Its price was the death of God's dear Son. Let us not deny God His right to be gracious!

## **Growing in Christ**

### **The Intimate Connection Between Justification and Sanctification**

The Reformer John Calvin, though he rejected the Roman Catholic confusion of justification and sanctification,[1] nevertheless took the position that they were "constantly conjoined." He used the illustration of the light and heat from the sun: Although one can clearly distinguish between them, one cannot separate them! Nor can justification and the renewal process be separated. Calvin wrote: "There is no dispute as to whether or not Christ sanctifies all whom He justifies. It were to rend the gospel, and divide Christ Himself, to attempt to separate the righteousness which we receive by faith from repentance." [2] In this view the other Reformers concur.[3]

That justification is a dynamic experience, involving renewal, and therefore inseparably linked to sanctification, seems to be the position of Ellen White: "Forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. . . . God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God'" (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114, emphasis in original).

If we understand "forgiveness" in this context as a synonym of justification, then it becomes evident that Ellen White saw the restoration of a right relationship with God (justification) as more than merely a legal arrangement. For her, it was a dynamic, life-changing, living experience. This means that sanctification, though not identical to justification, is firmly embedded in that experience. One cannot be justified without simultaneously beginning the *new*

*life*. A birth takes place, with all the elements that belong to living: desires, decisions, goals, purposes. Nevertheless, a complete lifetime stretches out before the babe in Christ, and with it, unending opportunities for growth.

And as this growth in Christ proceeds, it is continually covered by the justification experience. This means we never grow outside of Christ. Throughout the process, we are covered by the merits of Christ's righteousness.

The Old Testament word *qadesh* has basically two meanings: First, it means "to belong to God"-in reference to men, things, days, laws, etc. Israel was holy because God had separated her from the surrounding nations as a special people to Him. The sacrifices were holy; and so were the sanctuary, the Sabbath, and the Ten Commandments.

Second, the word had also a moral/ethical meaning: "Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy" (Lev 11:44). This means that those who are to stand in God's presence were to have "clean hands and a pure heart" (Ps 24:4).

In the New Testament, *hagios* carries the basic meaning of Old Testament *qadesh*, though here the moral/ethical meaning is far more prominent. But here also we find the idea of a people being holy because they belong to God (1 Peter 2:9; Rom 9-11).

### **Emphasis on Holy Living**

Paul placed strong emphasis on the concept of a holy people. God's saints are to be "holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation," continuing in "faith, established and firm" (Col 1:22, 23; cf. Eph 5:27). This theme of a new life unto God he pursues vigorously in Romans 6. Here he makes the point that the genuineness of our faith proves itself in obedience to God and in presenting our members as "slaves to righteousness." Previously held in "slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness," we are now in "slavery to righteousness leading to holiness" (verses 18, 19). "Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life" (verse 22).

In fact, throughout Romans 6 the apostle emphasizes this new obedience. His argument: "You belong to God. Then live as unto God! You have been born a new creature. Then live the life of a new creation." In Paul's approach, the *indicative* of justification is always followed by the *imperative* of the life of faith that emerges from it. Herein lies the ethical character of righteousness.

To be born, then, is not a goal in itself. Rather, we receive the opportunity to live. We are acquitted in order to live a life of freedom and purity for God and with God, now and eternally.

With this newness in Christ there comes a tremendous sense of *freedom*. Freedom from guilt. But there is also a freedom with respect to sin itself; not in the sense that sin-or the defeats that accompany it-is gone, but a freedom from the *compulsion* to sin. We are free from the attractiveness of sin. The way of sin no longer brings that prurient fulfillment it once did. Wrote Ellen White: "When we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, we shall have no relish for sin; for Christ will be working with us. We may make mistakes, but we will hate the sin that caused the sufferings of the Son of God" (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 360).

This is what it means to live "according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:4). This is the state of the person who has given himself wholly to Jesus Christ.

### **So Why the Continuing Struggle?**

This powerful assurance notwithstanding, there is still an ongoing struggle with sin and

waywardness. Why? Does it suggest that my relationship with God is not what I thought it was? that I am in fact lost, a spiritual failure?

In our zeal for the Lord, we sometimes draw hasty conclusions that produce needless anxiety and threaten Christian experience. We may draw encouragement from these statements by Ellen G. White: "The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 561).

And again: "There can be no self-exaltation, no boastful claim to freedom from sin, on the part of those who walk in the shadow of Calvary's cross. . . . Those who live nearest to Jesus discern most clearly the frailty and sinfulness of humanity, and their only hope is in the merit of a crucified and risen Saviour" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 471).

The most important question in life is How do I stand with God? And of the answer, many sincere and serious Christians are not sure. We look at our own lives and feel that it is not a pretty sight! We see a string of failures and shortcomings, and as a consequence our whole style of Christian living becomes cramped, weighted down with a feeling of guilt, overwhelmed by a sense of hopelessness and discouragement.

It would be well to read again, thoughtfully, Philippians 3:12-14, where the Inspired Word tells us to learn to forget that which is behind and reach for that which is ahead-to press on toward the goal in Christ Jesus. And we should remember that these words come immediately after Paul has said that the only righteousness worth having is that which comes from faith in Christ Jesus.

### **The Divine Requirement**

So what does God expect of His people?

1. A commitment and surrender to Him that is unqualified and wholehearted. God does not need a people sitting on the fences of this world, dithering between the world and God, and not knowing really where they belong. He is seeking men and women who have made up their minds and who have no intention of turning back on their commitment.

2. A people who keep looking to Christ. That posture never changes along the way. And then what happens? "By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, and from strength to strength. . . . He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Jesus Christ" (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 395).

3. A people who are firmly established in the *knowledge* and *practice* of Christ's way of life. This is to live the life of the Spirit. The life of the Spirit, as Paul so eloquently expresses it in Galatians 5:16, is contrary to the life of our sinful nature. The fruit of the Spirit is the opposite of the fruits of the flesh. The follower of Christ is a warrior who never gives up; he will fight the battle against sin until the Lord returns, for that's how long the battle will last!

Rather than the complete eradication of our sinful nature, what God offers is the power of the risen Lord, through the ever-present ministry of the Holy Spirit, to counteract the bent of our sinful nature. Here is a statement that speaks directly to this point: "The Christian will feel the promptings of sin, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; but the Spirit striveth against the flesh, keeping up a constant warfare. Here is where Christ's help is needed. Human weakness becomes united to divine strength, and faith exclaims, 'Thanks be to God, . . . [He gives] us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor 15:57)" (*The Sanctified Life*, pp 92, 93).

Righteousness by faith means to look *continually* and *exclusively* to the risen Lord. Look away, and hope is gone. The righteousness that Christ offers is not the beginning of some kind of self-righteousness, self-worthiness, or self-congratulation, but rather the permanent end to such attitudes. The one who is justified in Christ lives continually in Him. Herein lies our assurance, our rest, our fulfillment, security, and victory.

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[1]. At the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Roman Catholic Church adopted a blurring of any distinction between justification and sanctification. Confusing the two, it became easy for Catholics to think in terms of "justification by degrees," or to conceive of being *partly* justified.

[2]. John Calvin, "Acts of the Council of Trent, With the Antidote" (1547), in *Tracts and Treatises in Defence of the Reformed Faith* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, Pub. Co., 1958), vol. 3, p. 116.

[3]. For an example of Luther's position, see the introduction to his *Commentary on Romans* (1522). A sample of Melancthon's views may be seen in his *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* 4, 72, 1531.

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